

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SANAA 02550 160756Z

11

ACTION PM-03

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R 151330Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4717

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

COMIDEASTFOR BAHRAIN

USS ELMER MONTGOMERY

DIA WASHDC

CINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

CINCLANTFLT

CNO WASH

S E C R E T SANAA 2550

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, YE

SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST FORCE SHIP VISITS TO YAR

REF: USDAO SANAA 0057 DEC 74

1. AS REPORTED BY USDAO SANAA 0057, USS ELMER MONTGOMERY (DE-1082) PAID VISIT TO HODEIDA FROM DEC 9-11. THIS WAS FIRST VISIT BY USN WARSHIP SINCE 1965 AND, MORE SIGNIFICANTLY FIRST VISIT SINCE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS RESTORED IN 1972. EARLIER VISIT IN JUNE 1974 HAD IN FACT BEEN SCHEDULED, BUT POSTPONED DUE TO CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT THROUGH "CORRECTIVE ACTION" BY YAR MILITARY ON JUNE 13, 1974.

2. RESUMPTION OF SHIP VISITS HAS HAD SOME SENSITIVITY DUE
SECRET

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PAGE 02 SANAA 02550 160756Z

TO YARG EFFORTS OVER PAST TWO YEARS TO REORIENT ITS MILITARY

RELATIONSHIPS FROM SOVIET UNION TO WESTERN COUNTRIES. UNTIL RECENTLY, WHEN SAUDI ARABIA BEGAN DRAWING UP DETAILED PLANS FOR PROGRAM OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE, YARG HAD RECEIVED MANBR STUDY MISSIONS AND HAD HEARD MANY EXPRESSIONS OF SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING. IT HAD, HOWEVER, RECEIVED NO FIRM COMMITMENTS. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, YARG HAS BEEN UNDERSTANBABLY HESITANT TO CUT MILITARY ASSISTANCE TIES COMPLETZLY WITH SOVIET UNION, ALTHOUGH LATTER HAS BEEN ALMOST ENTIRELY UNRESPONSIVE TO YAR MILITARY NEEDS IN LAST EIGHT YEARS. YAR MILITARY HAS THEREFORE SOUGHT TO KEEP ITS MILITARY CONTACTS WITH WEST, ALTHOUGH GENUINELY FRIENDLY, IN LOW PROFILE PENDING REASSURANCE THAT WESTERN AID COULD BE COUNTED ON TO REPLACE SOVIET UNION'S.

3. IT WAS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT YARG AGREED ORIGINALLY TO VISIT OF USS PAUL LATE JUNE AND RECENTLY TO VISIT USS ELMER MONTGOMERY IN DEC. TIMING OF LATTER WAS COMPLICATED BY PRESENCE OF HIGH-RANKING SOVIET MILITARY DELEGATION FROM NOV 27 TO DEC 9, VISIT YARG DID NOT WELCOME BUT FELT IT COULD NOT REFUSE. IT WAS OBVIOUS TO EMBASSY AND DATT THAT, IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THAT YARG WANTED TO KEEP SHIP VISIT IN LOW PROFILE. WE FELT THAT THIS APPROACH IN FACT WAS APPROPRIATE, SINCE OUR MAJOR AIM WAS TO RE-ESTABLISH PRINCIPLE OF REGULAR MIDEASTFOR VISITS IN MANNER LEAST LIKELY TO STIR OPPOSITION FROM LEFTIST ELEMENTS.

4. WE THEREFORE VIEW VISIT OF USS ELMER MONTGOMERY, ALTHOUGH IT RECEIVED LITTLE PUBLICITY, AS CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS. GREATEST SHARE OF CREDIT MUST BE GIVEN TO OFFICERS AND MEN OF SHIP WHO, IN SHORT TIME ON ONLY TWO DAYS, OBVIOUSLY MADE LASTING IMPRESSION ON YEMENI NAVAL OFFICERS THROUGH A DISPLAY OF HIGHEST PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS, THOUGHTFUL AMERICAN HOSPITALITY, AND EXEMPLARY MORALE AND DISCIPLINE. BY ADAPTING TOHLOW-KEY APPROACH, CAPTAIN BROWN AND HIS STAFF WERE ABLE QUICKLY TO ESTABLISH RAPPORT WITH SENIOR YEMEN NAVAL OFFICERS WITHOUT OVERWHELING THEM, LATTER BEING SENSITIVE TO EXTREMELY LIMITED EFFECTIVENESS THEIR OWN NAVY. AS NOTED IN USDAO REFTTEL, THERE WAS DISTINCT WARMING IN YEMENI RESPONSE AS VISIT PROGRESSED, WARMING WHICH SHOULD POSTIVELY AFFECT YARG RESPONSE TO FUTURE VISIT. VISIT OF USS ELMER MONTGOMERY WAS ESSENTIALLY RE-CONNAISSANCE MISSION SUPERBLY ACCOMPLISHED BY SHIP WHOSE MOTTO

SECRET

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PAGE 03 SANAA 02550 160756Z

IS APPROPRIATELY -TO THE FRONT".

5. AS RESULT SUCCESS THIS CRUCIAL FIRST VISIT, BELIEVE WE CAN NOW PLAN FOR REGULAR SERIES MIDEASTFOR CALLS IN HODEIDA. I BELIEVE TWO VISITS YEARLY WOULD NOT STRAIN YARG FACILITIES EXCESSIVELY. MOREOVER HARBOR DREDGING, TO BE BEGUN IN EARLY 1975 AND COMPLETED IN SAME YEAR, SHOULD DEEPEN CHANNEL FROM TWENTY-THREE TO TWENTY-EIGHT FEET AND ALLOW PIERSIDE

BERTHING, CHANGE WHICH WOULD GREATLY SIMPLIFY LOGISTICS, IMPROVE "VISIBILITY", AND ALLOW PLANNING MORE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS. IF AT ALL POSSIBLE I WOULD RECOMMEND AVOIDING INTENSE HEAT AND HUMIDITY OF SUMMER, SINCE THERE IS LITTLE RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY FOR CREW, EXCEPT BASIC OUTDOOR SPORTS AND MINIMAL SIGHTSEEING. OPTIMUM TIMES WOULD BE MARCH/APRIL AND OCT/NOV. ONCE FIRM AGREEMENT BETWEEN SAG AND YARG HAS BEEN REACHED ON A CONTINUING MILITARY AID PROGRAM, BELIEVE YARG SENSITIVITIES ABOUT PUBLICITY WOULD BE ELIMINATED. BELIEVE THAT TIME THEN WOULD BE EMINENTLY SUITABLE FOR VISIT BY COMMANDER, MIDDLE EAST FORCE, ADMIRAL HANKS, TO SANAA IN CONJUNCTION WITH SHIP VISIT TO HODEIDA, HIS SCHEDULE PERMITTING. WE WOULD ENVISION PROGRAM IN SANAA INCLUDING DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION AND CALLES ON PRESIDENT, AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LTC IBRAHIM AL-AHMID, AND OTHER SENIOR MILITARY LEADERS, FOLLOWING WHICH PARTY WOULD ENPLANE TO HODEIDA FOR SHIP VISIT. IT WOULD PROBABLY BE PREMATURE TO CONSIDER THIS PROPOSAL FOR SCHEDULED MARCH 1975 VISIT OF USS TRIPPE (DE-1075), UNLESS SAG MOVES WITH EXCEPTIONAL SPEED ON CONCLUDING MILITARY AID AGREEMENT. WE WOULD NEVERTHELESS WELCOME A VISIT BY ADMIRAL HANKS AT AN EARLY FEASIBLE DATE SUBJECT TO HIS CONCURRENCE AND APPROPRIATE WASHINGTON APPROVALS.

6. IN ADDITION FINE REPRESENTATIONAL EFFORT, WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK CAPTAIN BROWN AND STAFF FOR WARM HOSPITALITY EXTENDED TO EMBASSY TEAM IN HODEIDA. WE ALL ENJOYED A TOUCH OF HOME. NEWTON

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